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Report Threats to U.S. Negotiators on Canal

By JOSEPH VOLZ

Washington (News Bureau)—Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos Herrera reportedly threatened to set off an international incident in 1974 when he learned that the hush-hush U.S. spy outfit, the National Security Agency, had eavesdropped on the most intimate details of his personal life.

Scripps-Howard Newspapers reported yesterday that the mercurial Torrijos threatened U.S. Panama Canal negotiators after an unidentified U.S.

Army sergeant allegedly gave him an agency dossier. There is no indication that the Pentagon took disciplinary action against the soldier for stealing the highly classified material.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, which apparently learned of the incident from U.S. intelligence sources, plans to listen to CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner's explanation tomorrow. However, sources said that this case basically involves the National Security Agency and military intelligence—not the CIA. Turner not only heads the CIA, but also is chief of all U.S. intelligence.

Torrijos never went to the press concerning the incident, and the State Department has denied that anyone tried to blackmail U.S. negotiators in the Carter administration. The incident occurred two years before Jimmy Carter was elected.

Torrijos, a source of concern to U.S. intelligence because of his admiration for Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba, also told a reporter last May that "our telephones are tapped."

Panamanian officials now say that Torrijos, who signed the Panama Canal treaty last week, was only kidding.

The National Security Agency, however, routinely tunes in on the telephone or radio conversations of important foreigners — allies and adversaries — around the world. A U.S. intelligence source said that agency transcripts are provided to State De-



Adm. Stansfield Turner

Omar Torrijos Herrera
Dossier of most intimate details.

partment officials during many diplomatic negotiations.

It was not believed that any special program was set up by the agency or the CIA to gather material on the negotiations but that some diplomatic, as well as personal, information was obtained during routine investigation.

The CIA had a paramilitary base in the Canal Zone during the Nixon administration and hundreds of U.S. Army Special Forces teams were sent out from Fort Gulick in the Canal Zone into Latin America to fight guerrillas. The CIA and Pentagon controlled the operation.

Some U.S. intelligence sources also say that Spanish-speaking U.S. soldiers, ostensibly military advisers, played a role in a 1969 military coup which briefly overthrew Torrijos while he was attending a horse race in Mexico City. But Torrijos returned to the country without armed opposition a few days later and took charge again.